

Message from outgoing USTSF President, Larry Davis
15 October, 2010

It's been an outstanding experience working with so many dedicated, enthusiastic people in what has amounted to a huge amount of progress for USTSF and the game and sport of table soccer, both here in the USA and worldwide.

In my several years at the helm of USTSF – having taken over for Kathy Brainard in 2003-4 – we've seen the USA's pro tour expand from just three Tornado majors and a dozen regional and state championships to three Tornado majors, majors on two other manufacturers' tables, and nearly 30 regional, state and large city championship tournaments easily totaling over a half million dollars in prizes per year. In the same timeframe, the International Table Soccer Federation has gone from 18 member countries to 63, and from 32 sanctioned tournaments worldwide to over 50 annually. Participation in the ITSF World Championships has gone from 32 players and only one event (Men's Singles) and a few dozen spectators, to this year's combined ITSF World Championships and World Cup with a total of 500 participants in 14 events and literally thousands of spectators. Even more, ITSF's WCh/WCup and each of its "World Series" level tournaments are now broadcast on EuroSport2, in 58 countries and in 14 languages!

We've also seen USTSF take the lead on publicizing the sport, with my personal program of community, media, sporting goods, sports travel, coin & home amusement, nightclub & bar and soccer-related industry targeted press releases distributed in every town where a USTSF sanctioned tournament was held. This has resulted in publication of 1,500 newspaper, magazine & online articles via syndication, and countless radio interviews, TV spots and more, appearing everywhere from ESPN and Sports Illustrated to the New York Times and the Christian Science Monitor. Together with booths and networking at major sporting industry trade shows, USTSF has finally increased the visibility of table soccer to the extent that Convention and Visitors Bureaus, Sports Authorities and yes, potential event and tour sponsors are now calling USTSF with interest in finding out how they can work with our sport. Moreover, other new and/or growing sports are even copying USTSF's organizational documents, our sponsorship plan, our press kits, and even our new website. (Beyond that, USTSF's active and continuous contribution to worldwide press releases over these last several years has helped lay the groundwork for attracting media such as the above mentioned EuroSport coverage, and for product marketing from the likes of 55DSL/Diesel, MTV, Pepsi and Nokia, among others.)

Meanwhile, USTSF has worked to establish the documentation needed for recognition of table soccer as a sport by the US Olympic Committee, in accordance with USTSF's original charter. Of course, this can't happen until the International Olympic Committee first recognizes the sport via the ITSF. And that's well along the way, as ITSF now regularly meets with both the IOC and the General Association for International Sports Federations (GAISF) for progress reviews, planning and advice. So, why should USTSF wait? Better to have all our ducks in a row, and since USOC reps are frequently at the same sports industry trade shows as USTSF (and many other U.S. sports federations) we're keeping up as much visibility with them as we can in advance.

To that end, the USTSF is required to qualify/select and field a U.S. National Team, which we have done to some notable success over the last several years, growing from three players at the ITSF World Championships in 2004 to full Mens, Womens, Seniors and Juniors teams for a total of 24 players competing each year in the ITSF Worlds/World Cup – and taking home a total

during that time of over 65 medals and two World Cup titles (back-to-back, no less!). A true testament to the great skills and extraordinary adaptability of American players!!

USTSF further continues its charitable and grass roots promotional/player development programs. As a 501(c)3 Non-Profit public charity, USTSF's Tables for Kids and Tables for Troops programs and its Regional and State Directors and State Championships programs have led to table donations, charitable fundraiser tournaments and drawings, bigger, better and more effectively run & publicized tournaments, and again, more visibility for the game and sport, both locally and nationally.

And the USTSF has done all this in each year with a budget of less than \$10,000 – all of which until recently were donations (though in some years it was predominantly out of my pocket) and we've done it all with an all-volunteer staff of dedicated players. USTSF has never collected memberships, no one at USTSF has ever been paid for our work; we even attend trade shows to promote the sport out of our own pockets.

Certainly, the USTSF is not now nor will it ever be all things to all people. But it really is in a good place right now to make an even greater, more positive difference. Unfortunately, the entire USTSF staff are all workaholics in their day jobs, their own local foos promotions and more, so while myself and the entire USTSF staff have accomplished a great deal, we could have accomplished tens times as much if any of us had more time. For example, I work 60-72 hours a week in my day job in the military, and still work on USTSF promotions 32-40 hours a week beyond that (not to mention night school, an 18-month old at home, a money pit of a house, etc, etc). I have no life but no matter how I look at it, it's all worth it if it makes a positive difference for the game & sport I love so much – even if my contributions are behind the scenes and the players will never know I did any of it – and I'm 100% sure that all the other USTSF staff members would say the same.

Going forward, in its role as a National Governing Body for the sport and in accordance with USOC guidelines, the USTSF hopes to see player ratings (not rankings) become more standardized in such a way that it finally becomes clear and understandable to everyone how points are calculated. As such the USTSF may endorse proposals from IFP with its Everguide ratings system or as an alternative, look to new rating systems (such as that created by Ahmad Shadman, which many reviewers have found excellent and consistent with ELO systems for accuracy). The key is that whatever the system, it must: a) eliminate what has become grossly arbitrary and/or inaccurate annual/periodic "adjustments" by manufacturers and gain greater consensus for adjustments – if any – via player-based committees; and b) publish ratings updates online as they occur (or at most, within 10 days of the rated event) rather than annually or bi-annually. To date and for the time being, the USTSF has been simply "authorizing" manufacturers/promoters to use their own system – which also conforms to USOC guidelines – provided the ratings and their calculation process can be published for the players to see, and does not include "adjustments" either made outside of the published calculation algorithm or applied to some players and not others without explanation. Unfortunately and as we all know, that's not been the case for the system used by USTSA.

USTSF can also now move forward smartly on expanding its new relationships with potential sponsors. The USTSF's [Sponsorship Opportunities](#) document outlines many levels of involvement for sponsors and/or donors – what USTSF needs now is an experienced, aggressive sports sponsorships/fundraiser (paid as an independent contractor on a tiered or commission basis), or to teach a manufacturer to do the same. Personally, I'd prefer manufacturers to get out

of the tournament business (other than providing their products and/or paying to be a tour sponsor) so as to place the tour in the hands of players (ex: Germany's P4P foosball tour) or a player-run promotional organization that could retain the right to run tournaments on any/multiple tables, such as Mary Moore's IFP, or a player representative organization such as USTSF that could contract out tour/tournament administration (ex: tennis' ATP tour, the PBA, etc). Then if a good sponsorships/fundraiser for USTSF obtained two or three Presentation level sponsors, we'd be looking at a self-sustaining, million-dollar tour that increases prizes for the players while reducing entry fees, eliminates "admin/table fees," grows the player base at both grass roots and pro tour levels, gains increased media coverage, and benefits sponsors, manufacturers, and local communities all at once. I believe it is possible, but the question becomes: can USTSF, with its existing limited resources of time/money and so many other projects going on, find a way to advance on such outstanding opportunities?

The groundwork for all that and more has been laid over the last several years – perhaps now is the ideal time for more players with a passion for the game to step up and take the reigns – you can make it so. Don't fall into (or remain in) the mantra of apathy and disillusionment that so frequently has held our sport back.

I myself will probably never stop playing and promoting in some way or another just as I've always done since I started playing in the mid-1970s. I'll always remember one day in 1979 at a place called Arapahoe Sports Center in Aurora, Colorado, when the already legendary Mike Bowers first told me "I'll quit playing when they pry the rods from my cold, dead hands." When combined with my own personal philosophy and catch phrase, "Ask not what the sport of Foosball can do for you, ask what you can do for the sport of Foosball," you have the complete perspective on whatever my future involvement with foosball will be.

I'll never stop enjoying the play – and the stories – I've shared with so many players both here and around the world. In my travels, everywhere from Denver to Ukraine, from Singapore to Germany, foosers have treated me like family. In that sense our game and sport really does transcend nationality, politics, age or gender, while on the table I remain amazed, even after 35+ years, how there are still no limits to what I can learn and do.

Again, it's been a pleasure working with all the USTSF Board of Directors, Regional Directors, State Directors and other player-volunteers, and with the various manufacturers, promoters and other national federations. We've all faced some tough challenges, had some heated debates, and shared some great times from which I've truly learned and grown a lot. I can only hope you all feel the same.

Thanks and very respectfully,
Larry Davis

P.S. Good luck to USTSF's new President, Pat Ryan; and special thanks go out to Pat, Kathy Brainard, Jim Waterman, Bruce Nardoci, Jim Stevens, Phil Kennedy, Stacey Myers, Mury Johnson, David Radack, Ed Geer, Shaun Cooper, Mark Winker, Melissa Kegg, Shelly Langley and Cissi Whipple, whose help/advice/assistance and counterpoints have made USTSF and my efforts to promote the sport all the richer; and to Link Pendley, Dave Courington, Alan Cribbs, Mary Moore, Ed McCloud, Johnny Lott and Lee Peppard all from who I gained tremendous promotions insights; and to Todd Loffredo, Tom Spear, Bob Gibson, Bob Maloney and the late Gil Jackson, who taught me to play – no, *really* play.